

News Release



Smithsonian



California State Railroad Museum to Host Prestigious Traveling Exhibition Presented by National Archives and Smithsonian

*Photo Exhibition Exploring America's Labor History
On Display through May 17, 2009*

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—The California State Railroad Museum, located in Old Sacramento State Historic Park, is set to host a prestigious Smithsonian exhibition titled “The Way We Worked” that opens on March 7, 2009. This historically significant exhibition demonstrates the enormous changes work and the workplace went through in the time period between the mid-19th century, when 60 percent of Americans made their living as farmers, and the late 20th century. The traveling exhibition, “The Way We Worked,” features 86 photographs from the National Archives focusing on the history of work in America and documenting work clothing, locales, conditions and conflicts. The exhibition, which is part of a 14-city national tour, will be on display at the California State Railroad Museum through May 17, 2009.

“The California State Railroad Museum is quite honored to showcase such a compelling and historically significant exhibition as ‘The Way We Worked,’” said Museum Director Paul Hammond. “In fact, this exciting exhibition fits perfectly with our own ongoing focus to depict the kinds of work done on the railroad—and the everyday lives of the many workers—that visitors can experience as they stroll throughout the Museum.”

“The Way We Worked” was created by the National Archives with the support of the Foundation for the National Archives, and is organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). The exhibition was originally on view through May 2005 at the Lawrence F. O’Brien Gallery at the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C.

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As the depository for historically valuable Federal records, the National Archives is home to thousands of photographs of work and workplaces taken by government agencies for many reasons, including: to investigate factory safety, track construction progress, office training or to emphasize the continuing importance of humans in a technologically modern environment. The images featured in “The Way We Worked,” though possibly taken merely for purposes of record keeping, often reveal much more about how social forces such as immigration, gender, ethnicity, class and technology have transformed the workplace.

The exciting exhibition is divided into five sections:

- “WHERE We Worked” explores the places Americans worked, from farms to factories, mines to restaurants, as well as how race and gender often determined roles and status;
- “HOW We Worked” examines the effects of technology and automation on the workplace with images of people on assembly lines or using their tools of trade;
- “What We WORE to Work” looks at the way uniforms serve as badges of authority and status, and help make occupations immediately identifiable;
- “CONFLICT at Work” looks back at not just the inevitable clashes between workers and managers over working conditions, wages, and hours, but also how social conflicts, such as segregation, have influenced the workplace;
- “DANGEROUS or UNHEALTHY Work” features many of the photographs taken by social reformers hoping to ban child labor, reduce the length of the work day and expose unsanitary workplaces.

Spanning the years 1857-1987, the images in the exhibition cover the entire range of photographs on the topic in the National Archives holdings. Supplementing the exhibition at various locations will be a video showcasing a variety of workplaces and audio segments in which workers from different eras discuss their experiences on the job.

The special Smithsonian photo exhibition “The Way We Worked” is complemented by the permanent “We’ve Been Working on the Railroad” galleries installed throughout the Museum in 2005 that portrays diverse, life-like figures and working conditions of the many workers who helped build the railroad and shape America’s rail industry. The goal of the Museum’s ongoing “We’ve Been Working on the Railroad” focus is to highlight the human face of railroading by showcasing those who performed the daily—and often demanding tasks—of working on the railroad.

More information about the special “The Way We Worked” exhibition, the ongoing “We’ve Been Working on the Railroad” focus and other museum related events, exhibits and activities is available at www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org.

National Archives and Records Administration

The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. Among the billions of records at the National Archives are more than 11 million still pictures in Washington, D.C., area alone. In addition, there are millions of photographs in the National Archives Presidential libraries and thousands more among the records held by regional records facilities.

SITES

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. Exhibition descriptions and tour schedules are available at www.sites.si.edu.

California State Railroad Museum

Operated by California State Parks with assistance from the nonprofit CSRM Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Widely regarded as North America’s finest and most-visited railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-sq. ft. Railroad History Museum plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill buildings in Old Sacramento. 24-hour info: (916) 445-6645 or www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org

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